

~~ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY~~ *Chimo*

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

14 January 1986

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIC Officers

SUBJECT: Making Estimates More Issue-Oriented:  
Inclusion of "Key Questions" in Concept Papers

1. In drawing up future concept Papers/TORs, we ask that you take great care from the outset to explicitly identify the few truly issue-oriented questions at hand in undertaking the Estimate. We would like to highlight these issues by instituting the use of "Key Questions" in each Concept Paper; this will serve to confine the focus of the exercise to examining those truly key questions. TORs in particular often end up as Christmas trees with everything hung on them. This needlessly complicates and prolongs drafting, and creates texts which end up too diffuse and sometimes overly duplicative of detailed work being done in DDI and other studies.

2. This also means that greater attention be given at the outset to what the future Key Judgments may look like. Not preconceptions set in concrete, but tentative central propositions which will be tested and changed by evidence and analysis. What will remain from such process, however, will be more assurance that the right questions have been addressed and that the issue-oriented purposes of the exercise will have been well served.

3. At the outset of certain broad Estimates we will be instituting informal discussions among a few relevant NIOs, to identify and agree upon what the handful of core issues are in these up-coming papers. In all cases, however, and whether or not your Estimates begin in this particular procedural fashion, please be rigorous in identifying the Key Questions in your Concept Papers/TORs. Confine those questions in most instances to no more than 3-5 issues. Relevant subordinate questions can of course be tucked under these, as appropriate, but in so policing Estimates from conception to birth we will end up with shorter, sharper, more issue-oriented Key Judgments -- those portions of our products which by far receive the greatest consumer attention.

  
Hal Ford  
Graham Fuller~~ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY~~

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DCI/NIC/H.Ford/G.Fuller:bha(14 Jan 85)

Distribution:

C/NIC

All NIOs, A/NIOs, AG'ers

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